



Friday, June 20, 2008

Vol. III, No. 25

In This Issue:

***New vehicles
for DPS
Pg. 2***

***Cardiologist
and his father
visit Manu'a
Islands
Pg. 2***

***Fotu o Samoa
chartered for
passenger and
cargo service
to Manu'a
Pg. 3***

***Governor signs
MOU with UH
and Honolulu-
based
company
Pg. 4***

***Ten new buses
for DOE
Pg. 5***

***Task Force
to investigate
increasing
prices of goods
Pg. 6***

***Historical Notes
& much more...***

***For additional
news,
information
and much,
much more
about your
government,
visit the
ASG Website
at
[http://www.
americansamoa.
gov](http://www.americansamoa.gov)***



First class stamp featuring American Samoa flag unveiled

A new first class stamp featuring the flag of American Samoa was released on Saturday, June 14 at the Executive Office Building in Utulei by Governor Togiola Tulafono and Postmaster Smitty McMoore. (This day is also the United States Flag Day).

The ceremony was attended by postal workers, cabinet members, Lt. Governor Ipulasi Aitofele Sunia, and Chief Justice Michael Kruse and his wife Gail.

The new stamp is part of the new series of stamps by the US Postal Service to honor the flags of all 50 states, the five territories, and the District of Columbia.

During the unveiling, Governor Togiola said that it is important for everyone to remember all the people who have shed their blood and lost their lives in defending the United States and its flag, adding that we are reaping the benefits of such sacrifices, through the many freedoms that we enjoy today.

Togiola described the unveiling as a "historic" day in the territory.

American Samoa is fortunate to have its stamp released early, along with Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, and Delaware.

Postmaster Smitty McMoore explained that the new stamp should be used with pride by our people, as the stamp will be posted on outgoing mail destined for places all over the world.

He called the unveiling a once-in-a-lifetime occurrence, before presenting the Governor with a complimentary roll of stamps, (which the Governor passed on to Lt. Governor Ipulasi), and an enlarged photo of the new stamp which Togiola in turn presented to the Chief Justice.

The stamps were created by Tom Engeman of Brunswick, MD, and features highly detailed flag portraits, state seals, and coat of arms. In addition, each stamp design includes artwork that provides a snapshot view of the state or area represented by each particular flag.

American Samoa's stamp features a blue flag with a red-edged white triangle where an American bald eagle is pictured clutching the traditional Samoan symbols of a war club and a staff.

American Samoa was last honored with a stamp in 2000, the year that marked a century since she became a territory of the United States.

ASG RADIO PROGRAM

With: Gov. Togiola Tulafono

On: Showers of Blessings FM 104. 7

Saturdays @ 7a.m.- 9:00a.m. Call: 699-8123/8124

DPS adds two new vehicles to their expanding fleet

It was only less than four months ago that the Department of Public Safety took possession of four new Chevy Tahoe sport utility vehicles from Chief Procurement Officer Laau M. Seui. Now DPS has added yet another two new vehicles to their fleet. (The vehicles are funded with money collected from traffic violation citations issued by the Department of Public Safety and enforced by the Judiciary).

This past Friday, CPO Seui handed over the keys for two new vehicles to Acting Police Commissioner Filifa'atali Mike Fuiava during a brief presentation ceremony held at the Procurement compound in Tafuna.

Each of the two vehicles cost an estimated \$21,000 and purchased from the US General Service Administration which, according to Filifaatali, resulted in big savings for his department.

Filifaatali expressed his gratitude to the Governor for continuously supporting DPS efforts in upgrading their service to the people and government of American Samoa.

In addition to the police vehicles, a third vehicle purchased for the Department of Legal Affairs was also ordered from GSA and is already on island.

HISTORICAL NOTES

By: Stan Sorensen, Historian, Office of the Governor

On June 14, 1889, the Berlin General Act proclaimed the "independence and neutrality of the Samoan Islands" and provided for the recognition of Malietoa Laupepa as "King." Another aim of this Act was "to avoid all occasions of dissensions between their respective and the people of Samoa" while at the same time "promoting as far as possible the peaceful and orderly civilization of the people."

On June 15, 1791, Captain Edward Edwards of HMS *Pandora*, searching for the mutineers from HMS *Bounty*, landed on Tutuila and found buttons and clothing from the boat of Jean-François de La Pérouse's First Officer, Paul-Antoine Fleuriot de Langle, who was killed at "Massacre Bay," A'asu, Tutuila, with 11 of his crew, on December 11, 1787.

On June 15, 1917, the 350-ton German steamer SS *Staatssekretär Solf*, which had sought refuge in Pago Pago Harbor just after the beginning of World War I on August 6, 1914, and had been captured by the U.S. Navy on April 7, 1917 when the United States entered the war, was cleaned and refitted in Pago Pago and was placed on the Navy's register as USS *Samoa*, thus becoming the first U.S. Naval vessel to bear that name. She was armed with four 3-pounder semiautomatic guns and was used to repatriate 250 Solomon Islanders, who had been brought to the former German Samoa as indentured laborers, and whose contracts had expired.

On June 15, 1938, Rear Admiral A.J. Hepburn, formerly CINCPAC (Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Fleet) and now Commandant of the Twelfth Naval District in San Francisco, was appointed as Chairman of the "Hepburn Board," which oversaw the Pacific Naval Air Bases (PNAB) project (NOy-3550 and NOy-4173). The PNAB contractors were the Hawaiian Dredging Company of Honolulu; the W.A. Bechtel Company of San Francisco, California; the Byrne Organization of Dallas, Texas; the Morrison-Knudsen Company of Boise, Idaho; J.H. Pomeroy and Company of San Francisco, and the Utah Construction Company (UCC) of Ogden, Utah. These companies were selected because of their experience in remote and difficult overseas locations, and because of their "can-do" attitude. The Board recommended that naval air bases be constructed or expanded at Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii, Midway Island, Wake Island, Guam, Johnston, Palmyra, Kodiak, Sitka and American Samoa. The Utah Construction Company of Ogden, Utah was subsequently designated to construct the Tafuna Air Base in American Samoa.

On June 18, 1888, Elder Joseph Henry Dean established the first branch of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints ("Mormon" church) at Leone, Tutuila.

On June 18, 1947, the U.S. Secretaries of State (George C. Marshall), War (Kenneth C. Royall), Navy (James Forrestal) and Interior (Julius C. Krug) recommended to President Harry S. Truman that responsibility for American Samoa, Guam and the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands be transferred from the Navy Department to the Department of the Interior at the earliest possible date.

Visiting cardiologist and his father visit Manu'a Islands armed with echocardiogram and donation of books

Department of Health medical director Dr. Ivan Tuliau has announced that Dr. Philip Milne, a visiting cardiologist from Maui, Hawaii is currently visiting the residents of the Manu'a Islands, armed with LBJ Medical Center's new echocardiogram machine which is used to evaluate heart functions.

The first clinic was held June 10 where more than 20 heart patients were evaluated. Of that number, 2 are being assessed and will be presented for off island referral.

Dr. Philip Milne is being accompanied by his father, Dwight Milne, PhD., of Montana who brought books from the people of Montana for the children of Manu'a. The donation of books includes over 100 different titles which have been presented to and accepted by Mr. Ale Filoiali'i, the current president of the Parent/Teacher Association in Ta'u, Manu'a.

The Milnes were not able to complete the second leg of their Manu'a visit to see the patients in Ofu and Olosega, due to bad weather conditions.

"DOH would like to thank the visiting doctors for their precious time and for this rare opportunity for the people of Manu'a to actually be seen by a cardiologist," Tuliau said in a statement.

Fotu o Samoa chartered for passenger and cargo service to Manu'a

The Fotu o Samoa, a boat belonging to the Samoa government, has been contracted to provide much-needed passenger and cargo service to Manu'a. This is according to an announcement from Governor Togiola Tulafono who has expressed deep concern for the lack of sea transportation service to Ofu and Faleasao wharves, not to mention what he calls inconvenience and hardship placed on the residents of Manu'a since the MV Sili was dry docked.

The Governor explained that there are always efforts to try and avoid situations like this as it has resulted in stores being low on stock as well as gasoline and other cargo not being delivered to Manu'a.

"I am happy to say that we have chartered the Samoa Shipping Corporation vessel – the Fotu o Samoa - and it will arrive this Sunday night and depart for Manu'a on Monday night," the Governor announced. "I truly regret the inconvenience this has caused to the people of Manu'a. I wish to thank you for your patience as we make all efforts to restore reliable sea transportation service between Tutuila and Manu'a."

In the Territory's efforts to ensure a vessel will always be available for service to Manu'a, the Governor has instructed the Department of Port Administration to perform sea trials on the Manu'atele III to determine its sea fitness.

According to the Governor, the completion date of the detailed work being performed on the MV Sili has been extended, and it will be at least two weeks before the MV Sili comes off the slipway.

When that happens, the MV Sili will still be required to undergo review to determine if it is ABS fit. The vessel will then be sent to Honolulu for further work and certification. Afterwards, it will return to the Territory in late July, towing a barge of government-purchased equipment and other supplies.

This is why, according to Togiola, he has asked the Port to thoroughly prepare the Manu'atele III to provide service to the Manu'a Islands. He said that if the Manu'atele III is sea worthy, and is approved to sail to Manu'a, then the boat will be scheduled to travel there on a regular basis. But for now, the Governor explained, the Fotu o Samoa has been chartered to transport cargo and passengers to Manu'a, and "it is our hope that utilizing this vessel will provide immediate relief for Manu'a as we await completion of repair service of our government vessels to properly provide safe and reliable sea transportation service for Manu'a."

The Fotu o Samoa is scheduled to depart for Manu'a with passengers and cargo on Monday night, June 16th.

The Governor explained that sea transportation to Manu'a is very important to sustain quality of life. "I wish to apologize for the inconvenience and ocean service interruption to Manu'a as we are making every effort to remedy the situation by taking the first step to contract the Fotu o Samoa."

He concluded, "It's a wonderful service for families and businesses, so we continue to make improvements and upgrade our sea transport services to Manu'a because it is a more convenient, energy-efficient, and economical form of transportation."

SHARE IMPORTANT INFORMATION & ACTIVITIES IN YOUR ASG NEWSLETTER

with your ASG workforce as well as the citizens of American Samoa.

Email your articles, announcements, pictures or other information to:

Harry Stevens (harry.stevens@americansamoa.gov) or Tialuga Vince Iuli (vince.iuli@americansamoa.gov)

10TH FESTIVAL OF PACIFIC ARTS COMING SOON...

PLEASE KEEP AMERICAN SAMOA CLEAN!

FA'AMAMA AMERIKA SAMOA!

Governor signs MOU with UH and Honolulu-based company to study renewable and alternative energy

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed this week by Governor Togiola Tulafono and Honolulu-based alternative power company MD² Alternative Energy Solutions, and the University of Hawaii's Pacific Business Center Program (PBCP) to pursue a study aimed at determining the viability of using natural sources of energy to produce electricity for American Samoa.

The MOU was signed on Tuesday, June 10th with Mr. Paul Ratterman of MD² Alternative Energy Solutions and PBCP director Papali'i Dr. Tusi Avegalio where Governor Togiola expressed his sincere gratitude for the wonderful opportunity that will enable the Territory to progress in utilizing alternative energy.

The Governor said he is "very happy" with taking the first step in our efforts to explore the alternatives that are available to American Samoa, and he shares the hope that it would lead to lessening the reliance on fossil fuel.

He added, "We can expect it will lead to more manageable energy rates for our people and be independent from the price of oil."

According to the Governor, the project will be administered by PBCP, with MD² contracted by the University of Hawaii. The initial plan will be to use wind as the energy source.

"This is a marvelous opportunity to pursue renewable and alternative energy so that we can help all of our families save a whole lot of money in the future," the Governor explained, adding that with rising cost of fuel, alternative energy solutions for the Territory have tremendous potential.

Governor Togiola to appoint task force to investigate increase in prices for local consumers

The increase in the prices of goods being sold at different local stores has resulted in complaints being lodged by consumers who are irate with the higher prices.

The complaints have been made known to Governor Togiola Tulafono who announced during his weekend radio program that he will be appointing a task force to look into the matter.

One of the items that has been marked up is rice, which has nearly doubled in price compared to several weeks ago. Currently, there is a shortage of rice in the territory and the next shipment is expected to arrive before the end of the month, at which time yet another price increase is expected to be implemented on it.

Other items like chicken are also being tagged and sold for higher prices. Some store owners who spoke to the Tapuitema revealed that the increase in the price of goods is their response to the continuous rise in the price of fuel. Basically, they believe marking up the prices will help ensure a little profit for them as they try to keep up with the increases in the prices of not only goods purchased, but also the costs being imposed for shipping, as well as duty and taxes.

Nonetheless, the Governor said his appointment of a task force to look further into the matter is to find out if the increases are part of unfair business practices. If so, he added, the government will use existing laws to file a case and take legal action in court against the businesses involved.

Togiola reminded his weekend listeners that the process will take some time and by the time the review is complete and if any wrongdoings are discovered, the shortage of rice will be resolved and will no longer be an issue.

Meanwhile, according to media reports from around the globe, the prices for rice and wheat could see an increase of about 100% this year as the prices of consumable products around the world continue to soar due to the skyrocketing rise in oil prices.

Chief Executive to explore use of LP gas for air conditioning in future ASG buildings

Governor Togiola Tulafono is taking his crusade for cleaner air, a healthier environment, and less electric production to a higher level, meeting with representatives of Origin Gas to hear a proposal on using propane (LP [liquid petroleum]) gas to operate air conditioning systems in future government building projects.

"It is imperative that the American Samoa Government look at ways to reduce the cost of electricity use by converting our air conditioning requirements in future government structures to LP gas," said Governor Togiola.

He described his meeting with Origin Gas as a "good one," and added that this is all part of our efforts to minimize electric production through a conversion of new ASG buildings to retrofit into LP gas.

(Retrofitted air conditioning converts an existing system to run on an alternative fuel, usually natural gas or propane).

The Governor explained that this is an ideal time to explore possibilities to retrofit the air conditioning of future government buildings, as "we are looking at efficient, in terms of fuel use," considering the current high cost of fuel needed to produce electricity.

He concluded, "It's important we continue to seek ways to save money for the government and I believe this is another good option that can significantly reduce the expense of running the air conditioning system that we're currently using."

DOE fleet to see improvement with purchase of 10 new school buses

Governor Togiola Tulafono made the long awaited announcement this week: "Ten new school buses have been ordered to improve the local Department of Education's bus fleet, just in time for the new school year!"

"We have many students across the Territory that count on our yellow school buses to get to and from school, so it is important that we spend the money to upgrade our fleet," said Governor Togiola. "I don't think there's anything more worthwhile than the safety of our children. And a new, dependable and safe school bus makes it even better."

The announcement couldn't have come at a better time, as the issue with school buses - or the lack thereof - has been highly discussed over the past few months with concerned parents wondering how they can get assurance that their children will receive safe transportation to and from school on a regular schedule throughout the school year.

Last month, Togiola made known his intention that come July, when the Fono reconvenes for its fourth regular session, he will request that funds from the \$20-million-dollar loan from the American Samoa Government Employees' Retirement Fund be utilized to upgrade the DOE's school bus fleet.

This was in response to complaints from a local resident claiming that kids from his family didn't attend school for a week because of scheduling problems with school bus transportation.

The Governor said at the time he estimates that at least \$1 million will be needed to equip the existing DOE fleet with new buses, as well as spare parts. He noted that some of buses are more than a decade old, making it very hard to get them repaired and back on the road.

(DOE is finding it difficult to repair some of the buses as they were purchased for a much lower price from the US General Service Administration (GSA), which does not provide spare parts, thus making it difficult to find the right off-island company from which the spare parts can be obtained).

Inquiries made by the Fono revealed that of the entire school bus fleet, only 10 buses are fully functional and are in compliance with safety standards, although the DOE main office claims that a total of 12 buses are transporting the territory's children.

The Governor explained today that the purchase of the 10 new school buses was made as an emergency order "out of great concern with the aging, and currently, inoperable school bus fleet."

He explained, "The transportation needs and safety of all of our students is a top priority and that's why we must replace our old bus fleet. We need to get those buses off the road for our children, and replace it with new, safe and reliable buses."

According to the Governor, the 10 new buses that include four 84-passenger, rear engine mounted models that will be shipped from the West Coast in time for the hosting of the 10th Festival of Pacific Arts on July 20th. The other six new buses will be smaller, configured to carry 44 to 66 passengers and will arrive by the start of the new school year.

Togiola said the Department of Education is also working on the purchase of spare parts to repair the existing school buses which are presently inoperable.

"DOE plans to repair the school buses that are deemed safe to operate and is the appropriate bus size to meet the needs of school transportation operation," said the Governor.

He concluded, "Repairs and costs of replacement parts have all been addressed by DOE to improve the idle fleet."

ASG hiring freeze lifted after release of study by the Department of Human Resources

Governor Togiola Tulafono says he will lift the freeze on all hiring, promotions, and increments for the American Samoa Government, after a study conducted by the Department of Human Resources found no major impact of the wage hikes on ASG's budget for the current fiscal year.

Governor Togiola issued a memorandum on May 20 explaining that the personnel freeze allowed the ASG to plan the rest of FY 2008 and FY 2009 personnel budgets, pursuant to the May 25 minimum wage increase of 50-cents per hour.

As of May 25, according to the Governor, all wages are now in place in accordance with the federal law on minimum wage, including differentials. This means ASG employees should expect to see the new raise(s) in their first paychecks in July.

On his weekend radio program, Togiola said DHR has completed its review of the impact of the new minimum wage increases and the good news is, ASG will not be required to carry out any reclassifications or change the job descriptions for workers being paid on the minimum wage level, as well as those in the next pay scale level.

The new minimum wage for government workers is now \$3.91 per hour and 117 employees have been affected in the new increases. The wages for another 134 employees had to be adjusted as well, to reflect a higher pay scale than their counterparts being paid on the minimum wage level.

The Governor explained that the new increases do not require any new funding source(s) for ASG, meaning no new taxes will be necessary. Even better, there is enough funding to cover the recently approved reclassification for teacher salaries.

According to Togiola, there is enough money in the current budget to cover the rest of FY 2008. For FY 2009 and years to follow, funding will be provided in the annual budget. However, some programs may be affected as the reallocation of funds to cover the increases means less money for government operations.

The Governor said ASG collections are doing very well and it is expected that the same will be true in years to come. He said the wage increases and DHR's review will be forwarded to the Treasury Department and the Budget Office for implementation.

Togiola concluded by thanking DHR, Treasury, and the Budget Office saying, "They made all these changes possible."

Governor's assistant legal counsel heads Task Force to investigate increasing prices of goods

Governor Togiola Tulafono has responded to complaints from local residents concerning the increasing prices of goods being sold in the territory, by establishing a Task Force headed by his assistant legal counsel Talaimalo Marcellus Uiagalelei who will investigate why the cost of goods being sold locally has ballooned beyond expectations.

Togiola made the announcement during his weekend radio program where a caller not only complained about the high mark-ups but also suggested that legislation be introduced to have the government control the costs of goods being sold in the territory.

In response to the suggestion, the Governor explained that the issue has been raised more than enough times on his weekend radio programs, and he reminded listeners that the government cannot impose cost control unless serious issues like price gouging arise, whereby government intervention would be required.

With the Task Force, the Governor basically wants to find out if the reason(s) for the higher prices is due to the increased cost of fuel, shipping costs, or simply mark-ups being imposed by store owners.

Togiola said that if any businesses are found to be in violation during the investigation, he wants local statutes to be used against the culprits in a complaint filed in court.

The Governor is also requesting that the Task Force review provisions of the 2006 price gouging law which may be applied to the current situation, and he is asking for recommendations, if any, on ways to strengthen the price gouging law.

(The price gouging statute is in place to curb the sudden increase of prices in the territory before and after a disaster hits local grounds).

The recent increase in the price of goods has affected everything from gasoline to utilities and food items. One of the items that has been marked up is rice, which has nearly doubled in price compared to several weeks ago. The shortage of rice has resulted in local residents turning back to basic Samoan food items like banana, breadfruit, and taro.

The Governor is calling on local farmers, as well as the ASCC Land Grant Program to ensure that there is a steady supply of these local produce for consumption, and he hopes that farmers won't impose price increases on their products because of the shortage of rice and the sudden demand for Samoan food.

Governor requests that American Samoa be part of all periodic federal surveys

To ensure that statistics are accurate and up-to-date in assisting the territory with its federal needs, Governor Togiola Tulafono has made known his wish that the territory be included in all federal periodic surveys.

This was outlined in a written testimony submitted a few weeks ago by the Governor to a joint hearing by the US House Committee on Natural Resources' Subcommittee on Insular Affairs and the Oversight and Government Reform Committee's Subcommittee on Information Policy, Census, and National Archives, which was held to review reasons why the US Census Bureau isn't collecting data for American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the US Virgin Islands, and how the lack of such annual surveys presents obstacles for those making decisions concerning the economies and communities represented in these US territories.

The Governor said that American Samoa requires the same services that the US Census Bureau makes available to the 50 states and other territories, and that American Samoa is especially interested in annual economic and demographic information.

In his submission to the joint hearing, Togiola wrote, "As part of the United States, we ask that we be accorded at least the same benefits and programs, Current Employment Statistics, and the Current Population Survey (CPS) that the federal government has made available to the 50 states and the other US territories."

He explained that the annual information is especially important to our government at this time to adequately quantify the needs of our people before the US Department of Interior and Congress, and added that the information would have been useful in attempts to gauge the impacts of the recent federal minimum wage increases in the territory.

According to the Governor, the lack of necessary data and information, as far as American Samoa is concerned, has been cited in many reports issued by federal agencies, with the most recent being the US Department of Labor's report on the impact of the minimum wage. In its report, the USDOL explained that research was limited due to the short time frame and the lack of timely labor market data obtained for the territory. (The second 50-cent minimum wage increase went into effect on May 25).

The second report referred to by Togiola is the "Economic Commission Report" of American Samoa, sanctioned by Congress, which noted that the territory lacks the necessary economical and statistical data necessary to measure economic activity or for comparative studies.

The Governor claims that the absence of such information has prevented American Samoa from creating an annual time series to track economic and population on an annual basis and consequently, where there is a need for information to track major economic conditions and trends, it must be done on an ad hoc basis by splicing together periodic benchmark information.

He recommends that American Samoa be included in all federal periodic surveys conducted by the US Census Bureau and the USDOL's Bureau of Labor Statistics, which includes monthly surveys of employers and households for economic information. In addition, the Governor believes that laws providing for these programs to the 50 states and other US territories should be amended to explicitly include American Samoa.

Togiola pointed out that "American Samoa remains patriotic to this great nation," as "our sons and daughters have committed their lives to the protection of American values and a free world, and our local populace remain committed to unconditional support of US policies and troops deployed abroad."

He concluded, "As loyal people, who have unselfishly served the United States well since 1900, we ask that we be treated just like any other state of the Union and accorded all the benefits and privileges every state so enjoys."

Over 10,000 rebate checks already issued

June started off as a good month for the 520 local residents who received their tax rebate checks, as well as the 67 people who received their tax returns. As of last week, a total of 10,200 rebate checks totaling \$11.1 million have been released.

The tax rebates are funded by the \$20.4 million received by the American Samoa Government from the United States Treasury under the economic growth package or tax stimulus rebate.

Since the rebate checks were distributed over a month ago, the endless lines that used to circle around the main corridor of the Executive Office Building in Utulei no longer exist as the majority of local tax payers have received their rebate checks which pays out \$300 per person, and the same amount for each qualifying child.

A Tax Office employee explained that those individuals who have received a tax refund check but have still not received a rebate check need to stop by the Tax Office to settle some issues which may include incomplete paperwork or the double claiming of children/dependents.

In addition to tax rebate checks, tax refunds amounting to \$157,000 were also distributed earlier this month. That amount covers both local taxes and the federally funded Additional Child Tax Credit (ACTC).

Altogether, the Treasury Department has released an estimated \$13 million in tax refunds (\$5.1 million in local and \$7.9 million in ACTC) covering more than 11,000 tax filers.

A Tax Office source says that the distribution of tax refunds are up to date, except for a small number of people whose information needs to be checked and/or verified.

Governor issues executive order appointing board of investigation to inquire about staple food shortages

The shortage of rice and other food items has become a concern to Governor Togiola Tulafono who has issued an Executive Order appointing a board of investigation to look into the matter.

“American Samoa’s available food supply is of paramount concern,” the Governor wrote. “Any deleterious actions that threaten our food supply, whether natural or man-made, must be carefully assessed and mitigated in order to assure that the residents of the Territory have ready access to purchase important items, among which, are staple foods.”

The Governor’s Office has been advised about an impending shortage of rice in the Territory, if one doesn’t already exist. The shortage, according to the Governor, may have negative effects on the availability of other staple foods produced in the Territory and may have an even more negative effect on commercial behavior among importers, wholesalers, and retailers toward the consuming public.

The Governor’s Office is further advised that some sharp business practices such as price gouging and merchandise hoarding may already be occurring with respect to rice supplies in the Territory.

(Some local stores who recently received a small shipment of rice have bumped up their prices, with the cost of a 20-pound rice bag ballooning to an average of \$18).

The Executive Order is therefore adopted and shall take effect immediately, in order to assess, investigate the causes of, and mitigate any negative effects owing to the rice shortage.

The purpose of the Executive Order is to establish and appoint a Board of Investigation pursuant to ASCA Section 4.0302 to:

- A. Investigate and document the cause or causes of the recent shortage of rice in the Territory, as well as the effects of the rice shortage on other staple foods imported and produced locally.
- B. Investigate and document any improper or irregular importation, wholesale or retail actions/trends prior to and during to the Territory’s rice shortage. This includes any occurrences of sharp business practices towards consumers which includes, but is by no means limited to, price gouging.
- C. Assess whether any provisions of the American Samoa Code Annotated or American Samoa Administrative Code have been violated by any individuals or entities, resulting directly or indirectly in the current shortage.
- D. Assess whether government intervention is required, or is necessary in order to mitigate negative effects on consumers in the Territory owing to the rice shortage.
- E. What actions the government may take legally against any individuals or entities that have resulted in the rice shortage, or that have resulted from the rice shortage.

The Board shall have full authority to subpoena witnesses, administer oaths, and report contempt to the High Court. Individuals who have been appointed to the Board include the Governor’s assistant legal counsel Marcellus Talaimalo Uiagalelei, Jennifer Augspurger, and Punimata Nu’uese

The Executive Order states that Board proceedings shall be electronically recorded and closed to the public and media. The Board shall forward to the Governor its written report consisting of findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

The Attorney General shall provide legal counsel to the Board who will be provided with technical and staff assistance from the Office of the Attorney General and the Department of Commerce.